

the ugly duckling of the brood, but the creator of new scientific knowledge now holds the material destiny of the world in the hollow of his hand as completely as his prototype in literature, art, music, or abstract thought dominated the future of its mental and moral destiny, though in neither case does their work mature in their own generation. In his reforming zeal Sir James Barrett would storm their last dug-out. The Royal Society is bidden to say good-bye to the relics of medievalism, and to admit to its membership successful organisers of transport, pioneers in public health improvement, and serious statesmen whose obvious services to mankind are at least the equal of those rendered by the dissection of earthworms, the discovery of a capsule on a bacillus, or recon-dite investigations into rare elements. The Royal Society, like the universities, no doubt has outgrown its original functions, which are being atrophied in competition with the claims of urgent and more practical affairs. Yet if one could go to sleep for fifty years and wake up, the importance of what is being more and more sacrificed might be seen in truer perspective.

FREDERICK SODDY.

NATURAL SCIENCE AND RELIGION.

The Next Step in Religion: An Essay toward the Coming Renaissance. By Dr. R. W. Sellars. Pp. 228. (New York: The Macmillan Co.; London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1918.) Price 1.50 dollars.

WHAT is to be the religion of the future? How far will traditional beliefs be affected by the view of the universe which modern science sets before us? Such are vitally important questions which in the present volume an American author tries to answer. The man of science takes for his postulate the uniformity of Nature. It has served him well, for upon it the physical and biological sciences have been built. But are man's ethical and æsthetic faculties, which dominate human life, conditioned by inexorable law? Could we, if we knew completely a man's history and environment, predict his every action? The man of science is tempted to answer "Yes," and his creed is, then, extraordinarily like the Stoic determinism to be found, for instance, in Marcus Aurelius. Most of us, however, are certain that we have free-will. As we make the admission, the chains of necessity cease to bind us. We find ourselves forced to make an idealist, or spiritual, interpretation of the universe, and many hold Christianity to be the most persuasive consequential position.

Dr. Sellars, in his book, begins by showing that primitive cosmologies, such as are to be found in the Bible, have been finally discredited. Copernican astronomy and the doctrine of evolution have radically altered the setting of Christianity. Next he shows how the study of comparative religion reveals the genesis of much of the myth and ritual legislation of the Old Testament.

He then proceeds to discuss the origins of Christianity. He admits Jesus of Nazareth to have been a historical character, but finds in St. Paul's teaching more affinities with the mystery-religions of the Roman Empire than with the faith of which Jesus made Himself the centre. A rapid sketch of the evolution of Christianity brings us to the conflict of science and religion in modern times. Throughout the earlier chapters of his book Dr. Sellars shows wide, though at times superficial, reading; some of his conclusions authoritative scholars would reject. He later argues against miracles, denies the existence of the soul and of personal immortality, finds the problem of evil a fatal obstacle to the Christian idea of God, and ends with a plea for a religion, purged of supernaturalism, which will mean "the valuing of experiences and activities, the striving for their realisation, the loyalty to their call." An obvious criticism presents itself. If man is a product of natural laws which have made him and which he cannot modify, what is the use of his "striving" and "loyalty"? The laws will work themselves out: man is their creature: the end is determined.

The theologian will say that Dr. Sellars has not got to the kernel of traditional Christianity. He chips off bits of the husk and announces that there is nothing inside. Of certain degenerate types of Protestantism it may be that nothing is left when Bibliolatry has gone. But Christian theology is first of all rational. It is founded upon the belief that we can reach absolute truth and upon a determination to succeed in the quest. Arising out of the attempt to find truth are the spiritual interpretations of the universe made by Jewish prophets and by 800 years of Hellenic speculation which began with Socrates and ended with Plotinus. A synthesis of these blends with Christ's teaching, and is constantly associated with the mystical experience of humanity. Modern natural science has nothing to do with the essentials of this massive structure. It can ignore it all; but, in so doing, it will fail to explain man to himself. Dr. Sellars's "religion" is a set of exhortations empirically derived from his social and political environment. We believe that, because its metaphysical basis is defective, it cannot satisfy men, though it may inspire some to live worthily in a democratically organised society.

E. W. BARNES.

THE PASSING OF THE OLD ORDER.

- (1) *The Neo-Platonists: A Study in the History of Hellenism.* By Thomas Whittaker. Second edition, with a Supplement on the Commentaries of Proclus. Pp. xv + 318. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1918.) Price 12s. net.
- (2) *On Society.* By Frederic Harrison. Pp. xii + 444. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1918.) Price 12s. net.
- (3) *The Psychology of Conviction: A Study of Beliefs and Attitudes.* By Prof. J. Jastrow.

Pp. xix+387. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co.; London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1918.) Price 10s. 6d. net.

THE only motive for grouping together three such varied books, each important, is that they all in a marked way exhibit an interest which connects them with the special circumstances of the present profound change in the old world-order. This remark may seem to have little significance in regard to (1) Mr. Whittaker's valuable study of the Neo-Platonists. It is not implied, however, that the interest, because circumstantial, is therefore ephemeral. His book appeared seventeen years ago, but the present issue of a new and expanded edition is only one instance of the extraordinary interest which the closing era of the ancient philosophy is arousing to-day. It certainly is not idle curiosity or the impulse towards an eclectic historical research which is drawing so many of our profoundest philosophers to study anew with living interest that last effort of the ancient world. Philosophy is seeking new expression; the old formulæ are unsatisfactory; science has given us a new world-view.

(2) Mr. Frederic Harrison's volume "On Society" is a collection of lectures and addresses, none of recent date or new. It is in another sense that their interest is circumstantial. They are offered us now in literary form because they have served their purpose as propaganda. They are the record of a sustained effort, throughout a long life still capable of vigorous expression, to give humanity a new religious ideal.

(3) Prof. Jastrow's study is called forth by the special circumstances which drew America into the world-war. He has sought to estimate the forces of logic and psychology which combined to bring about this great event.

OUR BOOKSHELF.

Who Giveth Us the Victory. By Arthur Mee. Pp. 191. (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1918.) Price 5s. net.

THIS little book is a vivid expression of optimistic theism. It has a strong *note personnel* and an interesting individuality. It is keenly evolutionist and as keenly religious, seeing in all the long processes of becoming the working out of an increasing purpose. It uses Prof. L. J. Henderson's "Fitness of the Environment" in a modernised argument for design. The building stones of the world were all thought out. Water reveals a teleological secret. "Man came into the world to find his house already furnished, his environment exactly what it should be, the necessities of his existence finding their unfailing response in the conditions established through countless ages past." Evolution is not a chapter of accidents, but the unfolding of a great thought.

Mr. Mee has been particularly successful in his picturesque presentation of some of the wonders of the world—the intricacy, the flux, the

adaptiveness, and the gradual emergence of mind which was implicit from the beginning.

The great steps in human evolution are poetically described, and man is regarded as fellow-labourer with the Absolute in continuing the task of Evolution. The kingdom of man as striven for by the wisest—and here the author is nothing if not patriotic—is what St. Augustine discerned. Much waste land has to be reclaimed, many marshes have to be drained, there are still many dragons in England; and part of the noble purpose of the book is to show how the lessons of the war may at once enlighten and encourage man in his great endeavour after a fuller embodiment of his highest and most lasting values.

Mr. Mee says in simple words and with some passion what many great thinkers have said learnedly and with more restraint. His book is timely and on the side of the angels, and though we spell some of the words differently we heartily wish it good speed.

Eastern Exploration, Past and Future: Lectures at the Royal Institution. By Prof. W. M. Flinders Petrie. Pp. vi+118. (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1918.) Price 2s. 6d. net.

THIS collection of lectures forms a useful and timely book. Prof. Flinders Petrie directs attention to the possibilities of archæological investigation under the new conditions which now prevail in Palæstine and in Mesopotamia. His experience urges him to utter a much-needed warning against the system which has already led to much loss of valuable material in Egypt and in Cyprus. He describes in a lucid way the problems on which excavation is certain to throw new light, and he marks out the sites which deserve special attention. Beginning with the later historical period, he describes the beautiful remains of the Christian period in Syria, and the painted tombs of Mareshah, which represent Greek art. Going much further back, the great Scythian migration, which made its centre at Beth Shean, in the valley of Jezreel, deserves special investigation. Jerusalem must not be allowed to become a modern commercial town; a new suburb must be built, and the sacred sites protected and laid open to systematic examination.

Prof. Flinders Petrie gives a lucid sketch of Mesopotamian culture, and he pleads the necessity of a special inquiry into ancient Elamite art. But the main burden of his discourse is to emphasise the urgent need that all future excavation shall be restricted to qualified archæologists, working under rigidly scientific rules, and that it shall not be permitted in the case of enthusiastic, but ignorant, amateurs. Traffic in antiquities, which leads to unauthorised digging by natives, should be sternly prohibited. It may be hoped that the administration soon to be established in Palestine and Mesopotamia will take heed of his advice, which will receive the concurrence of all scientific antiquaries.